

### Considerations concerning the functionality of Bessarabia's provisional administrative system during the first years of Russian domination (1812-1816)

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Cornea, S. (2008). Considerations concerning the functionality of Bessarabia's provisional administrative system during the first years of Russian domination (1812-1816). *Analele Universității Dunărea de Jos din Galați: Seria Istorie*, 7, 97-116. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-65304-3>

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*Sergiu CORNEA*

**CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THE FUNCTIONALITY OF  
BESSARABIA'S PROVISIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM  
DURING THE FIRST YEARS OF RUSSIAN DOMINATION  
(1812-1816)**

**Abstract:** The paper details the first five years of Russian administration in Bessarabia, a period in which an interesting dispute existed between the Russian civil servants, eager to remove all local regional particularities and to unify the provincial administration with that of the Empire, and the local Moldavian nobility, who struggled for the preservation of the old legal principles and administrative customs, with the use of the Romanian language in all the domains of activity.

**Keywords:** Bessarabia, Russian Empire, administration, juridical norms, Moldavian nobility, Russian civil servants.

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The administrative policy promoted by the Russian authorities in Bessarabia during the first years of occupation was imposed by the necessity to consolidate the military situation of the Empire. Having as immediate purpose to dominate the Balkans, the Russian governing circles planned to demonstrate the advantages of the Russian Orthodox control in Bessarabia, in order to win the sympathy of the neighbouring peoples. Therefore, they initially instituted an administrative provisional system that had many similarities with the one existing in Moldavia, thus accrediting the idea of a common administrative system.

The provisional character of the administrative system implemented in Bessarabia during the first years of Russian domination substantially influenced its functionality. This temporary system generated two big problems. The first one: being elaborated under very difficult circumstances for the Russian Empire and conceived as something ephemeral, it turned out to be far from perfection; thus, the implementation of this administrative system brought forward a great deal of deficiencies and imperfections. The second one: soon after its implementation, many great divergences appeared between the Russian civil servants and the local nobility concerning the further administration of Bessarabia. Both the local nobility and the Russian aristocracy considered this provisional administration as a transitory stage towards a more perfect system. The difference consisted in the fact that each side interpreted things in its own way. The local nobility was inclined towards the maintenance of an administrative system based on local juridical principles and administrative customs, with the use of Romanian in all fields of activity. The

Russian authorities insisted on the removal of the local particularities and on the unification of Bessarabia's administration with that of the central Russian provinces. This paper will examine the two problems. They are considered as extremely important for the study of the initial implementation of the Russian administration in Bessarabia. Regarding the first issue, we aim to analyse how the administrative institutions were established and how they exercised their competences, as well as to elucidate the deficiencies of these institutions.

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After concluding the peace of Bucharest, the Russian civil administration from the Principalities suspended its activity. The civil servants of the civil office of the Danubian military commandment were transferred to Chişinău, chosen as residence of the newly annexed province by G. Bănulescu-Bodoni and V. I. Crasno-Miloşevici<sup>1</sup>.

The mission to take into possession the annexed territory and to organize the civil administration of Bessarabia was given to the admiral P. V. Ciceagov, the commander-in-chief of the Danubian army<sup>2</sup>. Ciceagov arrived accompanied by Scarlat Sturdza and his son – Alexandru, with whom he had friendly relations<sup>3</sup> and who were appointed as his consultants<sup>4</sup>. S. Sturdza (related, through his wife, with the Moruzis<sup>5</sup>), a former treasurer and chief magistrate of Moldavia in 1792, had sold his estates and had settled down at first in Belarus, and afterwards in Russia<sup>6</sup>.

In the same time, as head of the diplomatic civil office of the Danubian army was appointed I. Capodistrias<sup>7</sup>, who had a great influence on the administrative organization of Bessarabia. Ciceagov ordered him, after signing the Treaty of Bucharest, to elaborate the project of the provisional administrative regulation of Bessarabia<sup>8</sup>.

The judicial support of the administrative system implemented in Bessarabia during the first years of Russian occupation was based on the following normative acts: "The Constitution of the Provisional Administration in Bessarabia", "Instructions of the admiral P. V. Ciceagov to S. Sturdza" and the normative act from February 2, 1813, "About the institution of two departments and their common meeting". These documents were elaborated taking into consideration Bessarabia's

<sup>1</sup> *Bessarabia*, edited by Şt. Ciobanu, Chişinău, 1993, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> The National Archives of the Republic of Moldova (N.A.R.M), fund 1, inv. 1, d. 3995, f. 11-11v; d. 3662, f. 18.

<sup>3</sup> C. Opaschi, *Prinţesa Roxandra: o descendentă a Sturdzeştilor la curţile europene*, "Magazin istoric", no. 10, 1999, p. 76.

<sup>4</sup> P. Cernovodeanu, *România şi ruşii. Politică şi încuscri*, "Magazin istoric", no. 4, 1996, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> N. Iorga, *Bessarabia noastră*, Chişinău, 1993, p. 128.

<sup>6</sup> Şt. S. Gorovei, *Sturdzeştii*, "Magazin istoric", no. 3, 1994, p. 25; Gh. Bezviconi, *Profiluri de ieri şi de azi*, in *Fapte trecute şi basarabeni uitaţi*, Chişinău, 1992, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> В. Г. Сироткин, *Борьба в лагере консервативного русского дворянства по вопросам внешней политики после войны 1812 г. и отставка И.Каподистрия в 1822 г.*, in *Проблемы международных отношений и освободительных движений*, Москва, 1975, с. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Gh. Bezveconăi, *Boierii Sturdza şi Bessarabia*, "Arhivele Basarabiei", no. 1, 1934, p. 37.

previous administration, which was preserved to a great extent, as well as its local administrative institutions and particularities.

The Russian central authorities, preparing new interventions in the Balkans, accepted such an approach to the problem. In his memorandum to admiral Ciceagov, Alexander I mentioned: "The organization of Bessarabia made by you is excellent and I will not modify anything"<sup>9</sup>.

The principal particularity of the new administrative organization consisted in the fact that the civil governor and the military commander-in-chief of the region were subordinated directly to the commander-in-chief of the Danubian army<sup>10</sup>. He was the representative of the central administration in the region and it was through his office that the people of Bessarabia stayed in touch with the central government and the tsar<sup>11</sup>.

On July 23, 1812, Ciceagov signed the order appointing Scarlat Sturdza as civil governor of Bessarabia<sup>12</sup>, officially confirmed on August 7, 1812<sup>13</sup>; S. Sturdza began his activity in October 1812<sup>14</sup>. The appointment of Sturdza as civil governor was not accidental. Nominating a local nobleman in such an important office created the illusion the local customs would be preserved. They relied on the fact that Sturdza's example would influence the rest of the Moldavian nobles not to leave the region and to cooperate with the new authorities<sup>15</sup>. The designation of a local nobleman to perform the highest administrative office in the province, according to the Russians, aimed to decrease the native people's dissatisfaction, generated by the uncertainty in which they found themselves after Moldavia's dismemberment.

The administrative system, instituted by the Russian authorities, continued to have in its structure certain similarities with the Moldavian administrative institutions. It also ensured the numerical predominance of the local nobility in these administrative institutions. In the departments' common meeting, the ratio between the local servants and the Russian ones was seven to five, but the most important

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted by L. Kasso, in *Россия на Дунае и образование Бессарабской области*, Москва, 1913, p. 198.

<sup>10</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 1, inv. 1, d. 3995, f. 14.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, this situation was maintained until the beginning of 1813, when admiral Ciceagov was discharged and his obligations concerning Bessarabia passed to M. I. Cutuzov. In November 1812, this mission was given to S. C. Veazmitinov, minister of Police, but on May 31, 1813, according to an imperial decree, the civil governor of Bessarabia was subordinated to the Russian central authorities; he had to address "the unsolved problems, on the right basis that all the governors have, in the existent administration of Bessarabia one does not have to introduce any changes until the decree comes into force". Cited in L. Kasso, *op. cit.*, p. 198; D. Poștarencu, *O istorie a Basarabiei în date și documente (1812-1940)*, Chișinău, 1998, pp. 70-71.

<sup>12</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 1, inv. 1, d. 3995, f. 10.

<sup>13</sup> А. Накко, *Очерк гражданского устройства Бессарабской области с 1812-1828*, "Записки императорского Одесского общества истории и древностей", т. XXII, Одесса, 1900, с. 111.

<sup>14</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 1, inv. 1, d. 3995, f. 22-23.

<sup>15</sup> The requests of the new authorities were disclosed by the intuition of the metropolitan bishop Gavriil: "one knows not only your language, but also the laws and the land customs, that's why for all these one is ready to console you". Quoted in B. Buzilă, *Din istoria vieții bisericești din Bessarabia*, București-Chișinău, 1996, p. 41.

positions belonged to the Russian servants<sup>16</sup>. The local administrative institutions and the former territorial administrative unit were maintained. The old names of the regions were preserved as well<sup>17</sup>, even if the region of Iași, for instance, represented only a part of the old district whose residence remained across the Pruth river.

Bessarabia's administration entirely depended on the region civil governor. But, due to his old age<sup>18</sup>, Sturza was permanently in an impossibility to perform his responsibilities. The documents and the official acts were signed, on his behalf, by the metropolitan bishop G. Bănulescu-Bodoni and the military commander, Hartingh<sup>19</sup>. Under such circumstances, the absence of an office of vice-governor badly affected the establishment and the functionality of the administrative system of Bessarabia.

Concerning the activity of the departments' common meeting, we should mention that its competences were very limited. It dealt, *de facto*, only with the examination of the petitions and addresses received by the civil governor. The department's common meeting was convoked only by the civil governor's disposition and it examined, exclusively, the problems indicated by him. The counsellors, designated only by the civil governor, were in total dependence upon him. In conclusion, we can ascertain that the departments' common meeting was an administrative institution with very limited competences and completely dependent on the civil governor's will. It should be also mentioned that the decisions of the departments' common meeting were irrevocable.

The organization and the activities of the departments were far from perfect. Analysing the method of the constitution, the structure and the activity of the departments, we can underline the following drawbacks: a) there was not any head of the departments able to deal with the organization, coordination and the control of the department activities; b) the lack of any forms of administrative control within the departments; c) the right to take a decision belonged to the entire department, and the different sections only dealt with the preparation of the matters and the files that had to be examined at the common session of the department, hereby making the whole process concerning the examination and resolution of the problems extremely bureaucratic; d) a strict mechanism for the implementation of the adopted decisions was not elaborated and did not exist; e) an efficient procedure of cooperation with the regional administrative authorities had not been settled (contradictory decisions and dispositions were thus adopted); f) the professional education of the civil servants that performed administrative functions was not appropriate; g) the existence of two parallel civil offices within the departments influenced the celerity of the administrative circuit; h) the examination of both civil cases and penal ones depended on the first department resort, and the non-existence of a strict delimitation in matters of justice provoked chaos in the departments' activities; i) not all the offices were occupied according to personal competence;

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<sup>16</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 2, inv. 1, d. 75, f. 5.

<sup>17</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 1, inv. 1, d. 3995, f. 11-11v.

<sup>18</sup> S. Sturza was an octogenarian when he was civil governor of Bessarabia.

<sup>19</sup> JI. Kacco. *op. cit.*, p. 200.

j) there was not a strict evidence of files and examined matters; k) there were many cases of bribery and administrative abuses; l) in the second department, only a single counsellor worked for more than a year in the second section. The same counsellor oversaw the activity of the police, having in his subordination the third section of the first department<sup>20</sup>.

At a provincial level, the administration was totally monopolized by the sub-prefects, who, owing to their judicial constabulary and administrative duties, were the absolute masters of their regions. They performed their duties according to the local common laws and customs, applied by the Russian civil servants according to their own will. Being appointed for only a year and paid with 20 up to 30 thousand roubles for the office<sup>21</sup>, the sub-prefects were more preoccupied to achieve their personal goals than to secure the proper administration and welfare of the inhabitants. In this context, we can mention the case of Somov<sup>22</sup>, chief magistrate in the district of Hotin, appointed arbitrarily by Leibin<sup>23</sup>, the counsellor of the first department, who neglected in the most brutal way the local customs and the regulations. He not only dismissed him, but also very brutally assaulted him<sup>24</sup>.

Although the exemption of taxes for a period of three years was adopted, the sub-prefects continued to collect them<sup>25</sup>, and the levying of taxes was granted to private persons<sup>26</sup>. Every audience with the sub-prefect could only take place if the petitioner gave a certain "gift". The sub-prefects could apply openly corporal punishment in front of the inhabitants. The sub-prefects forced the population to work in their own interests, such as building houses or performing different agricultural works on their properties<sup>27</sup>. The orders and dispositions were given by the sub-prefects verbally, thus lacking any possibility to control their legality.

The Russian civil servants, including those of high rank, undervalued the sub-prefects' institution. It is necessary to mention that the majority of the sub-prefects' offices were held by Russian civil servants. In this case, a natural question appears – were the institutions vicious or the civil servants who performed those functions and who did not know and did not want to know the laws and the inhabitants' language, and came to Bessarabia having in mind a single idea: to enrich themselves?

<sup>20</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 2, inv. 1, d. 54, f. 4; *Бессарабский статистический комитет. Записки*, t. 3, Кишинев, 1868, c. 131-132.

<sup>21</sup> *Bessarabia și basarabeni*, edition and comments by M. Adauge and Al. Furtună, Chișinău, 1991, p. 160.

<sup>22</sup> Not to mistake P. Somov, who at that period was named as head of the governor's civil office.

<sup>23</sup> A. Sava, *Crâmpoie din viața Basarabiei sub ruși (1812-1830)*, in "Viața Basarabiei", no. 11, 1933, pp. 8-9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 10-13.

<sup>25</sup> Besides the existent taxes and impositions, arbitrary new ones were introduced, for instance, custom houses' taxes and the tax for heat wine. The sub-prefects took the tenth part of every sum of money judged in the civil conflicts, the so called *fulfilment*.

<sup>26</sup> M. Adauge, *Istoria și faptele*, in "Nistru", no. 4, 1989, p. 113; V. Tomuleț, *Unele probleme de controversă privind dezvoltarea social-economică a Basarabiei (1812-1868) în istoriografia sovietică moldovenească*, in *Probleme actuale ale istoriei naționale și universale*, Chișinău, 1992, p. 185.

<sup>27</sup> *Бессарабский статистический комитет. Записки*, t. 3, Кишинев, 1868, c. 138.

Bessarabia's economic situation during the first years after the annexation continued to be precarious. After the war and owing to the unfavourable relations between Russia and Turkey, Bessarabia lost its traditional commodity market. The epidemics and the starvation caused havoc throughout the region.

The defective activity of the new administration and the economic disaster in the region, after six years of war, generated a phenomenon that created difficulties to the Russian authorities: the mass emigration of the population from Bessarabia to Moldavia. The inhabitants' flee across the Pruth, a region under Turkish domination, is a persuasive proof of the Russian administration's achievements in Bessarabia.

The mass emigration across the Pruth was also amplified by the Bessarabian peasants' hostility against the serfdom system existent in Russia<sup>28</sup>. There were cases when whole villages from Hotin, Codru and Soroca fled across the Pruth<sup>29</sup>. Only in 1814, three thousand inhabitants fled across the Pruth<sup>30</sup>.

Neither the nobility was enthusiastic with the perspectives of remaining in Bessarabia. Few boyars chose in 1812 the Russian domination. But many held their ground because they could not sell their properties in the given period<sup>31</sup>, and the Porte imposed on them an ultimate condition – either they sell their properties or they will have to migrate to the new Russian provinces<sup>32</sup>.

The mass exodus thwarted in the plans of the Russian authorities to transform Bessarabia into a "flourishing province". The Russian intention to offer a model of good administration to neighbouring nations with the aim of winning their favours was not realized. Being worried about the already created situation, the Russian authorities sent to Bessarabia a civil servant named N. Baicov, to perform an investigation of the existent situation in the region. After the investigations, he made a report to the minister of Internal Affairs, prince Kurakin<sup>33</sup>, which was also sent to the minister of Police, S. C. Veazmitinov, including an explanatory letter in which he stated that: "Indeed, it will be a very regrettable thing if this region, Bessarabia, that so far was very populated and fertile and its acquisition cost so much, now, becomes bared"<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> When Bessarabia was annexed, the juridical status of the Moldavian peasants was much more favourable than the status of the Russian ones. The Moldavian peasants were free to move from one territory to another as soon as they fulfilled all the landlord's obligations. Their obligations consisted in keeping the compulsory services of 12 days per year and the tithes payment. "The Moldavian peasants – stated Ion Pelivan – were scared of the slavery horror and thousands of them fled across the Pruth to Moldova". See I. Pelivan, *Bessarabia de sub oblăduirea rusească*, in "Moldova", no. 10, 1990, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> C. Tomescu, *Diferite știri din Arhiva Consiliului eparhial Chișinău*, in "Arhivele Basarabiei", no. 2, 1935, p. 117; D. Grama, *Lupta românilor de la răsărit de Prut pentru apărarea legilor Moldovei în primele decenii ale secolului al XIX-lea*, in "Destin românesc", no. 1, 1994, pp. 86-96.

<sup>30</sup> I. Chirtoagă, *Din istoria Moldovei de Sud-Est până în anii 30 ai sec. al XIX-lea*, Chișinău, 1999, p. 129.

<sup>31</sup> According to article VII of the peace Treaty of Bucharest, a period of 18 months, from the day of the treaty ratification, was given for the locals to decide and sell their properties. Seen B. И. Мискевка, *Ткач В.И. Русско-турецкий мирный договор 1812 г.*, in "Revista de istorie a Moldovei", no. 1, 1990, p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> N. Iorga, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>33</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 5, inv. 1, d. 54, f. 3-10.

<sup>34</sup> *Bessarabia și basarabienii*, p. 161.

Baicov's considerations, visibly tendentious, expressed the spirit of the civil servants and of the Russian authorities, engaged in the process of administering Bessarabia. He stated that at the forefront of Bessarabia's administration, "having the privilege to maintain the local traditions and laws", was a governor "absent minded, without experience, with mild temper" and "a neglectful government". The administration was guided by local customs, but they consisted in "the right of the most powerful and of that who gives the most"<sup>35</sup>. "Can a region prosper, Baicov asked himself rhetorically, a region that is run according to the customs based on unpunished misdeeds. Besides, the whole power remained in the hands of a man who so far did not rule anything and guided himself by local habits, thus acting only in his own interest, and behaving like a lease-holder"<sup>36</sup>. Summarising his considerations (or his insinuations regarding the administrative system, laws and Moldavian civil servants), he mentioned categorically that "it was not the case to invent new forms of administration that could be without any use or even dangerous" and "it would be better if in Bessarabia there would be the same ruling system as in the provinces of Taurida and Georgia, that means to introduce the Russian judicial and administrative institutions"<sup>37</sup>. Analyzing Baicov's report, it is easy to notice that the single problem preoccupying its author was that of obtaining as many benefits and incomes as possible from Bessarabia, whose acquisition cost "streams of Russian blood and many millions roubles". That is why he insisted on two moments that would allow obtaining large incomes for the state treasury: 1) the liquidation of any local particularity and the introduction of the Russian administrative system; 2) the enlargement and the consolidation of the taxable basis in the region.

It should be mentioned that, after 1812, Bessarabia was invaded by numerous Russian civil servants who did not know the language, the laws, the traditions or the local customs. Russian civil servants, of different ranks and levels, attributed the deplorable state of the administration exclusively to the laws, institutions and the Moldavian civil servants.

Incontestably, it was evident that the local nobility was contaminated by the Phanariote scourge. The Phanariote rulers brought with them a new political mentality. The governing period was short<sup>38</sup>, but the throne could be obtained or maintained only by paying money. For the Phanariotes, to rule was equivalent to becoming rich. Significant for this phenomenon was the evolution of the Greek word "chiverneo", that meant *to rule*, but in Romanian it meant *to get a job by paying*. This phenomenon captured the entire administrative body. The main function of the

<sup>35</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 2, inv. 1, d. 54, f. 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Between 1711 and 1812, 35 hospodars ruled in Moldavia. C. Mavrocordat governed six times in Wallachia and four times in Moldavia. In the period of between the final two reigns of Mavrocordat in Moldova, seven rulers governed the Principality. See D. Berindei, *Românii și Europa. Istorie, societate, cultură*, vol. I, *Secolele XVIII-XIX*, București, 1991, pp. 7-8; K. Hitchins, *Românii. 1774-1866*, București, 1998, p. 25; П. Н. Халиппа, *Бессарабия до присоединения к России*, Кишинев, 1914, с. 28, 34.



state was the fiscal one, “the whole body from the hospodar to the simple employee was preoccupied with the idea of extorting as much money as possible from the population”<sup>39</sup>. The permanent involvement of the Porte in the internal affairs of the country violated the principle of continuity in the administration and contributed to the non acceptance of an administration on the basis of some strictly regulated norms and on rational and efficient administrative techniques.

But the analysis of the historical sources convinced us that the Russian civil servants were culpable with the defective administration of Bessarabia. “It was very difficult to appreciate, stated L. Casso, which category of civil servants was more dangerous for the country’s interests: the local Moldavian people who performed many functions in Bessarabia or the civil servants from the Russian provinces”<sup>40</sup>. The Russian officials who came to Bessarabia were accompanied by “a real army of reliable men” (or, more exactly, of job hunters and fishermen in troubled waters), considered appropriate for the most advantageous offices<sup>41</sup>. It was natural that these civil servants (named by the tsar himself “unsatisfied civil servants, undesired Russians, conscripted according to the needs of times, in a great hurry”<sup>42</sup>), who did not know the laws, language and local traditions, had hostile attitudes towards the Moldavian administrative system.

It is very clear that the Russian Empire could not blame the administrative institutions and its civil servants for the existent situation in Bessarabia. Russia’s political objectives imposed the vilification of the local institutions with the aim of gradually replacing them with the Russian ones.

As mentioned above, the second big problem generated by the provisional nature of the administrative system implemented in Bessarabia was the controversy between the Russian civil servants and the Moldavian nobility concerning the further administration of the region. The Russian civil servants who came there after 1812 pleaded for the liquidation of the national particularities in the administration and for the introduction of the Russian administrative institutions and laws. The local nobility proposed the maintenance of the administrative institutions and structures constituted on local administrative principles, and also the use of the Moldavian laws and Romanian language in all the domains of activity.

In the context of these disputes, it is necessary to clarify the circumstances concerning the dismissal of governor Sturza, which took place in less than a year after his appointment. Several historians consider that Sturdza had been dismissed according to Alexander I decree, on June 17, 1813<sup>43</sup>. Iurie Colesnic considers

<sup>39</sup> V. Georgescu, *Istoria românilor de la origini pînă în zilele noastre*, București, 1992, pp. 89-91.

<sup>40</sup> Л. Кассо, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>41</sup> A. Crihan, *Drepturile românilor asupra Basarabiei după unele surse rusești*, in “Bessarabia”, no. 10, 1991, p. 124.

<sup>42</sup> *Bessarabia și basarabenii*, p. 163.

<sup>43</sup> И. Халипа, *Основные исторические данные о Бессарабии*, in *Труды Бессарабской губернской архивной комиссии*, т. 2, Кишинев, 1902, с. 35; А. Накко, *Очерк гражданского устройства Бессарабской области с 1812-1828*, in *Записки императорского Одесского общества истории и древностей*, т. 22, Одесса, 1900, с. 117.

Baicov's report as the main cause for discharging governor Sturdza<sup>44</sup>. Other researchers insisted on the version that Hartingh was named civil governor in Bessarabia after Sturza's death in 1813<sup>45</sup>. The study of archive documents<sup>46</sup> allows us to ascertain that the most trustworthy version is that of Gh. Bezviconi, who mentioned: "He was not replaced, but gave the ruling of Bessarabia to general Hartingh"<sup>47</sup> and "His old age obliged him to surrender the administration to the regional general Hartingh, his brother's daughter's husband"<sup>48</sup>.

As it results from the regional government's decision of May 20, 1813, governor S. Sturdza, because of an illness which impeded him from performing his obligations<sup>49</sup>, gave his job attributions to Hartingh, by an official decree, until his recovering<sup>50</sup>. Thus, Sturdza was not dismissed, but he delegated his competences to the military governor of the region. This is confirmed by the tsar's decree of June 17, 1813, in which it is stated: "according to the reports received from the civil governor, Sturza, and from engineer general-major Hartingh, they determined that the first one was severely ill and was in the impossibility to perform his obligations. So his duties were taken over by the latter. ... I consider necessary that until another governor is designated in the region of Bessarabia, this function should be performed by Hartingh, who has as a second job the power of a military and civil head"<sup>51</sup>. Thus, when the decree was issued, I. M. Hartingh was already performing the function of civil governor, and the concerned document was confirmed by the realities existent at that moment.

Incontestably, S. Sturdza would have been dismissed, a logical continuity of the colonial policy promoted by the Russian authorities in the conquered territories. After Sturdza, who was the single Romanian noble to act as civil governor of Bessarabia, only Russian civil servants had access to that function.

We should also mention that general-major Ilie Catargi, of Romanian origin<sup>52</sup>, who at that moment performed the function of commissary of the border guard troops, was proposed by the local nobility to serve as a civil governor<sup>53</sup>, but this request was not been taken into consideration by the Russian authorities.

<sup>44</sup> I. Colesnic, *Bessarabia necunoscută*, Chişinău, 1997, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> E. Aramă, *Istoria dreptului românesc*, Chişinău, 1998, p. 92; P. Cernovodeanu, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67; N. Ciachir, *Bessarabia sub stăpânire țaristă (1812-1917)*, Bucureşti, 1992, p. 27. (S. Sturza died on April 3, 1816).

<sup>46</sup> Especially Fund 5, inv 2, doc. 1. (N.A.R.M.).

<sup>47</sup> Gh. Bezviconi, *Viața boierilor Stamati*, in "Din trecutul nostrum", no. 6, 1934, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Idem, *Din viața oficialităților basarabene din secolul trecut (1823-1833)*, in "Viața Basarabiei", no. 5-6, p. 137.

<sup>49</sup> Scarlat Sturdza suffered from hemiplegia (paralysis of half of body, because the nervous system was injured). See Șt. S. Gorovei, *Sturdzeștii*, in "Magazin istoric", no. 3, 1994, p. 25.

<sup>50</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 5, inv. 2, d. 1, f. 1-2.

<sup>51</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 2, inv. 1, d. 36, f. 1-3.

<sup>52</sup> In November 1792, Hetman Ilie Catargi fled to Russia, where he received the rank of general. See N. Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>53</sup> Пархонович И. Краткий очерк жизни и деятельности Высокопреосвященного Гавриила Банулеско-Бодони, Экзарха Священного Синода, Митрополита Кишиневского и Хотинского (1813-1821г.), Труды Бессарабского Церковного Историко-Археологического Общества. Выпуск V, Кишинев, 1910, с. 48.

The designation of I. M. Hartingh as a civil governor came at a significant moment in the process of the administrative organization of Bessarabia. A year after the solemn proclamation of preserving the local particularities in administration, civil governor became a person who knew very little the laws, traditions and local administrative structures. "The designation of a man who was far from the Moldavian noblemen, explained L. Casso, had been caused by the governor's desire to have a more energetic representative at Chişinău, but also by the evident tendency to bring closer the administration of Bessarabia to the structure of the Russian state"<sup>54</sup>. This was, in fact, not only general Hartingh's task, but also his successors'.

The Russifying efforts of governor Hartingh caused dissatisfaction among the local nobility. In order to limit the governor's abuses, they addressed him, on October 7, 1813, a collective appeal in which they asked for setting up the office of a provincial prosecutor as a guarantor of keeping the institutionalised situation in Bessarabia. The appeal was signed by counsellor D. Rîşcanu, F. Başotă, I. Rusu, M. Donici, Filactachi and other noblemen<sup>55</sup>. On October 12, 1813, Hartingh had to inform the Ministry of Justice about the content of the Bessarabian nobles' appeal<sup>56</sup>.

In January 1814, in a letter addressed to the minister of Justice, the metropolitan bishop G. Bănulescu-Bodoni supported the Bessarabian nobles' appeal<sup>57</sup>. On March 13, 1814, the minister of Justice I. Dmitriev informed the metropolitan bishop that he received the letter and that he would soon communicate the decision adopted<sup>58</sup>. But, unfortunately, the problem was never solved<sup>59</sup>.

Hartingh, supported by the Russian forces, sent several reports to the central authorities, in which, by slandering the laws and the local administrative institutions, he referred to the liquidation of the local forms of administration and insisted on the introduction of Russian laws and institutions. These reports were published<sup>60</sup> and their content is known. We will only refer to the matters directly concerning the administrative problems of Bessarabia.

On December 10, 1813, Hartingh addressed an appeal to the general director of the Ministry of Justice, Bolotnicov, in which he asked for permission to judge the Moldavian civil servants according to the Russian laws. He insisted on the administrative reorganisation according to the central provincial model, thus motivating the situation by the absence of local laws. In the administrative organisation of Bessarabia, nothing could be borrowed from the Moldavian administration, and the local nobility could not be used, because "there was nothing sacred for them except their own interest"<sup>61</sup>. In this case, a natural conclusion comes

<sup>54</sup> Л. Кассо, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

<sup>55</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 2, inv. 2, d. 6, f. 5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>57</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 22, inv. 1, d. 4, f. 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 3.

<sup>59</sup> The function of a regional prosecutor was instituted in Bessarabia in 1818, when a new administrative regulation came into force.

<sup>60</sup> Бессарабский статистический комитет. *Записки*, т. 3, Кишинев, 1868, с. 114-146; ЗООИД, т. 22, Одесса, 1900, с. 122-131.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in A. Hakko, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-124.

to his mind: Bessarabia can only be ruled according to the model of the other Russian provinces and exclusively according to the Russian laws<sup>62</sup>.

The appeal was accompanied by a project of a new administrative organisation, in conformity with the Russian administrative system, elaborated by the head of the civil office, governor P. Somov<sup>63</sup>. The project contained a description of the present administrative system, and very many deficiencies were enumerated. The departments' common meeting was imperfect, in his opinion, because there was not a legal procedure to contest its decisions. Essentially, he subtly insisted on limiting the prerogatives of the common meeting and on consolidating the governor's powers<sup>64</sup>. There were seven Moldavians and only two Russians among the nine civil servants, a fact which was, in his opinion, "an enormous inequality". They "have Moldavian civil office, and deprive the Russian counsellors of the possibility to participate in deliberations in the civil, penal and executive files"<sup>65</sup>. Referring to his statement, it is necessary to mention that an objective analysis of the historical sources demonstrates that the Moldavian counsellor did not deprive the Russian ones of the possibility to act, but the Russian servants did not want to penetrate in the essence of the law norms and of the local administrative traditions. After the enumeration of the faults of the Bessarabian administration, that were true to a great extent, he concluded that it was necessary to reorganise the Bessarabian administration, practically proposing the liquidation of Bessarabia's special status.

On January 30, 1814, Hartingh submitted an appeal to the minister of Police S. C. Veazmitinov, in which he asked for the permission to limit the term of the Moldavian counsellors' functions from the first department of the regional government, which he termed as incapable to do their obligations, and for their replacement with Russian civil servants<sup>66</sup>. In March 1814, Hartingh submitted the new project for the administrative organisation of Bessarabia, but on December 23,

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<sup>62</sup> "This region, that does not have laws became a part of the empire, being ruled according to Russian laws, and empowered by Alexandru Pavlovici, will have welfare as well as those which obey him". *Ibidem*, p. 125.

<sup>63</sup> Referring to the administrative system of the Russian provinces that the Russian civil servants insisted on introducing, we should mention that when Bessarabia was annexed, in Russia there was maintained the administrative system instituted in 1775-1778. The administration was constituted on the basis of departmental principles – all the local civil servants and institutions were in the subordination of central ministries. The head of the province was the governor, who was in the subordination of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. His principal obligation was to oversee if all the civil servants and institutions did their jobs correctly, according to the instituted law. He ruled the country with the help of: the governor's civil office, several commissions and offices that performed different activities with administrative and management character. The district administration was composed of a sub-prefect and the tribunal of peace, with the aim to perform administrative and constabulary functions. The civil office of the tribunal of peace headed by a secretary had two sections: executive and investigating. See *Екатерина II Учреждения для управления губерний всероссийския имперіи*, б/м, б/г, с. 12-95.

<sup>64</sup> *Бессарабский статистический комитет. Записки*, т. 3, Кишинев, 1868, с. 122-123.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 125.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 116.

1814, he addressed once again to the minister of Police concerning the counsellors of the first department<sup>67</sup>.

To generalise the above stated facts, we can mention that the efforts of slandering the institutions and the local civil servants became a permanent preoccupation of the Russian civil servants, regardless of function or rank. At first, they insisted on the deficiencies of the local administrative institutions, and then discovered the total lack of laws in the province; the local civil servants were considered uneducated, amoral and without the necessary abilities to occupy administrative offices.

The Moldavian nobles were very disagreeable for general Hartingh and for all the governors that followed him. Not only because they wished them to preserve their privileges and positions in society, but also because they insisted on maintaining their laws, customs and language.

In 1814, Hartingh accused without reasons and facts several Moldavian noblemen, thought to have smuggled goods across the Pruth and to have ordered the Bessarabian stamp with the Moldavian emblem and inscriptions. Several noblemen were expelled to Russia at the governor's insistence<sup>68</sup>.

Hartingh's hatred for the Moldavian nobility was probably the result of an inferiority complex, which the general felt in the presence and in his contacts with the Bessarabian nobles, who were closer to the western culture and civilisation than to the Russian nobility<sup>69</sup>. Apart from general Hartingh's perfidy, it is difficult to find other reasonable explanations for his statements<sup>70</sup>. The Duke of Richelieu, who was in Russia's service since 1803, wrote the following about the Moldavian nobles: "I had the impression that they were far from being in that foolish state which the Russians pretend them to be in, for sure, to justify the arrogance and miserable treatment that they had been exposed to and that they didn't deserve absolutely"<sup>71</sup>. The insinuations of the Russian administrative authorities addressed to the local civil servants are indubitable proofs that the Russian administration in Bessarabia made efforts to become a privileged caste, separated from the native population and reduced to their own representatives.

In January 1815, Hartingh addressed the same proposal to the minister of Justice, D. P. Troșcinski: to reorganise the Bessarabian administration according to the model of the Russian provinces<sup>72</sup>.

In the same time, he continuously insisted on the impossibility to keep Bessarabia in order because there were no local laws. The statements of the Russian officials of different ranks about the absence of Moldavian laws were illogical and

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 116-118.

<sup>68</sup> P. Gore, *Anexarea Basarabiei*, Chișinău, 1992, p. 26.

<sup>69</sup> C. Aldea, *Pagini dintr-o istorie zbuciumată: Bessarabia până în anul 1920*, București, 1993, p. 48.

<sup>70</sup> Gh. Bezviconi stated that the cause of Hartingh's conflict with the local nobility was a quarrel with his wife; by leaving his wife, he started to quarrel with all the nobles: Gh. Bezviconi, *Viața boierilor Stamati*, in "Din trecutul nostrum", no. 6, 1934, p. 9; Idem, *Din viața oficialităților basarabene din secolul trecut (1823-1833)*, in "Viața Basarabiei", no. 5-6, p. 139.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Gh. Brătianu, *Bessarabia: Drepturi naționale și istorice*, București, 1995, p. 28.

<sup>72</sup> A. Hakko, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

had a pronounced political substratum. Combating these statements, the metropolitan bishop G. Bănulescu-Bodoni, in his letter to the prosecutor of the Synod, prince Golițin, mentioned: "the Moldavian Divan is ruled even now by Justinian's laws, and besides them by the laws of the Moldavian rulers compiled by the Church and the local nobility, and if sometimes there were made any abuses and some nobles in the circumstances of those times did not respect the dispositions of those laws, it could not be a proof that Moldavia did not have its rules"<sup>73</sup>.

Concerning the Moldavian legislative system, it is necessary to mention that the unwritten, common law had a great importance in the functioning of the system. Even when written Byzantine laws were applied, the traditional law did not lose its importance. In the Principalities, consuetudinary law remained preponderant as compared to other types of laws up to the end of the feudal epoch<sup>74</sup>. This situation is a particularity of the Principalities and it does not signify a total lack of a legislative system. C. Mavrocordat created an institution for judges, which anticipated the separation of judicial from executive functions. The written procedure was introduced in the justice. So, by 1812, in Moldavia a very well organized judicial system existed in Moldavia, guided by means of written laws and of the consuetudinary law. The statements that there were no Moldavian laws have no logic at all. Later, the civil servants and the Russian scientists who visited Bessarabia convinced themselves about the existence and the viability of the local juridical norms. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the following one, many new works dedicated to the local laws of Bessarabia appeared<sup>75</sup>, which proves the inconsistency of the assertions regarding the Moldavian laws.

Anticipating the events, we should mention that governor Hartingh received a single answer to all his interventions and appeals: "until new dispositions, in Bessarabia the announced conditions of the former civil governor, Sturdza, in 1813, will remain in force"<sup>76</sup>.

We do not consider Hartingh's efforts as a manifestation of his personal aspirations and peculiarities. He was the exponent of the governing forces from Petersburg that demanded a quicker integration of the occupied territory. Another group was composed of several local nobles, among them I. Capodistrias, M. Speranski, A. Czartoryski. Taking into consideration the strategic objectives of the Russian foreign policy, they opted for a more liberal attitude towards the national

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<sup>73</sup> А. Стадницкий, *Гавриил Банулеско-Бодони, экзарх молдо-валахийский (1808-1812)*, in *Митрополит Кишиневский 1813-1821*, Кишинев, 1894, с. 287.

<sup>74</sup> V. Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>75</sup> We list some of these works: К. Арменопуло, *Местные законы Бессарабии*, Одесса, 1908; А. Дониц, *Краткое содержание законов, извлеченных из царских книг*, Одесса, 1831. (The translation of the book appeared in Iași in 1814); А. Егунов, *Местные и гражданские законы Бессарабии*, Сп-б, 1881 and *Сборник местных в Бессарабии узаконений по предметам гражданского права*, Сп-б, 1882; Л. Кассо, *Византийское право в Бессарабии*, Москва, 1907; В. Линовский, *О местных Бессарабских законах*, Одесса, 1842; О. Пергамент, *Спорные вопросы Бессарабского права*, Сп-б, 1905 and *О применении местных законов Арменопула и Доница*, Сп-б, 1911; М. Шимановский, *О местных законах Бессарабии*, Одесса, 1887-1888.

<sup>76</sup> И. Анцупов, В. Жуков, *Реформы в управлении Бессарабией с 1812 по 1828гг*, in "Ученные записки КГУ", t. 26, 1957, с. 151.

perfidy. Then, the rapport of forces was favourable to the latter, but the liquidation of the local particularities of the regional administration was considered inopportune by the Russian central authorities.

The Russian representatives' insistence for controlling the administrative system of Bessarabia worried the local nobility. This conflict was also generated by the spread gossip that Hartingh wanted to obtain the permission to introduce the corporal punishment to Moldavian nobles<sup>77</sup>.

The divergences and conflicts between the Russian civil servants and the native ones were at the level of the regional administration. Among the chief magistrates of the district of Hotin there were great misunderstandings in 1814. The inhabitants of Chisinau were in conflict with the local police that did not keep the local laws and had a hostile attitude towards the natives<sup>78</sup>.

The local nobility denounced the governor's activity at the Committee of Russia's Ministries and addressed a letter to the tsar insisting on the following requirements: to preserve the local laws; according to the Moldavian laws, the metropolitan bishop should be head of the first department of the regional government; the office of governor should be given to a local person who should know the local laws, customs and nobiliary families<sup>79</sup>.

The Bessarabian noblemen addressed a letter to the metropolitan bishop G. Bănulescu-Bodoni, asking him to be plenipotentiary representative. He was given three requests, which were to be sent to Petersburg: to Tsar Alexander I, to the State Council and to the Council of Ministries<sup>80</sup>. Another request was for the President of the State Council, Count Saltîcov. The metropolitan bishop sent the requests to the noblemen and to the head attorney prosecutor of the Synod, Prince Goliţin. In their appeal to the tsar, the nobles asked him not to change the laws and "that the metropolitan bishop should be a member of the regional government, and to give another governor, but only from their region"<sup>81</sup>.

In their letter to the State Council, the noblemen wrote: "It already expires the sixteenth month since this province was given to the arbitration of greedy governors, since it moans under the pressure of abuses and under the harmful influence of the civil servants of the provincial government"<sup>82</sup>.

On July 5, 1814, another letter was sent to the tsar, which was signed by 54 noblemen and accepted by the metropolitan bishop G. Bănulescu-Bodoni. In that letter the nobles presented other requirements with an administrative character: to create a committee that would systemize the local customs and laws; to preserve the Romanian language and administration; the ruling of the country should be

<sup>77</sup> A. Boldur, *Istoria Basarabiei*, Bucureşti, 1992, p. 327.

<sup>78</sup> A. Sava, *Crâmpeie din viaţa Basarabiei sub Ruşi (1812-1830)*, in "Viaţa Basarabiei", no. 11, pp. 1-16.

<sup>79</sup> Д. Щеглов, *Участие Митрополита Гавриила в гражданском устройстве Бессарабии*, in *Кишиневские епархиальные ведомости*, no. 17, 1902, с. 368-369.

<sup>80</sup> А. Стадницкий, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-285.

<sup>81</sup> *Записки императорского Одесского общества истории и древностей*, т. 22, Одесса, 1900, с. 128.

<sup>82</sup> *Bessarabia şi basarabenii*, p. 159.

exercised “according to the unwritten laws and land customs”; the keeping of the noblemen’s privileges and the equation of the laws with the Russian *dvorenime*; the free access of Bessarabian nobles to military and civil service; the metropolitan bishop of Moldavia should be the governor of the region<sup>83</sup>.

Nevertheless, I. Catargi was not appointed governor of Bessarabia, and the metropolitan bishop G. Bănulescu-Bodoni was refused the presidency of the first department of the regional government<sup>84</sup>; however, the noblemen’s appeals were analysed at Petersburg. The situation from Bessarabia was discussed at the meeting of the Ministers’ committee on June 15, 1815, where they took the decision to send a civil servant from the Ministry of External Affairs, the state counsellor P. P. Svinin<sup>85</sup>. We should mention that a year before, in May 1814, an investigation on Bessarabia’s situation was done by general Gais<sup>86</sup>.

Before coming to Bessarabia, Svinin was given instructions to learn about the local laws. He had to know what their religion was, what kind of taxes they had to pay and how they were paid, what the incomes were and how they were obtained<sup>87</sup>. The analysis of the instructions received by Svinin allows us to conclude that the Russian rulers, including those of the highest rank, had vague pictures about the annexed province. It is strange that they wanted to know what religion was in Moldavia, being known very well the fact that the annexation of Bessarabia was motivated by the necessity of redeeming the Christians from the Ottoman yoke. So the real cause was not the care for the Christian brethren, but expansion to the Balkans.

The fact that the region will be inspected by the civil servant of the Russian central administration incited the local nobility who was convened at Chisinau for consultations<sup>88</sup>. In Bessarabia, P. P. Svinin had been told everything about the misdeeds and abuses done by the local administration<sup>89</sup>. Svinin presented himself as an inspector and ordered that all noblemen should be convoked in Chişinău with the acts that certified their origins. He stayed in Bessarabia for nearly seven months, from September 1815 until March 1816. The writer C. Stamati, a civil servant of the first department, was named as aide to accompany Svinin and to help him. I. M. Hartingh engaged C. Stamati on October 15, 1815<sup>90</sup>. An assistant was also named, Sandulachi, from the part of the local nobility, but in order to effectively select the legislative acts a special committee of local nobles was constituted<sup>91</sup>.

After the investigations, Svinin made a report, in which he described the administrative organisation of Bessarabia and characterized the administrative

<sup>83</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 2, inv. 1, d. 368, f. 22-27.

<sup>84</sup> L. Casso, *Dreptul Bizantin în Bessarabia*, Chişinău, 1923, p. 13.

<sup>85</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 88, inv. 1, d. 5, f. 2.

<sup>86</sup> N. Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>87</sup> Л. Кассо, *Россия на Дунае и образование Бессарабской области*, Москва, 1913, с. 209-210.

<sup>88</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 88, inv. 1, d. 5, f. 6-7.

<sup>89</sup> A. Накко, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>90</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 88, inv. 1, d. 5, f. 13, 25-43.

<sup>91</sup> D. Grama, *Lupta românilor de la răsărit de Prut pentru apărarea legilor Moldovei în primele decenii ale secolului al XIX-lea*, in “Destin românesc”, no. 1, 1994, p. 91.



institutions of the region, frequently referring to their activity<sup>92</sup>. To redress the situation, concrete measures were proposed: to replace the Moldavian nobles with more qualified ones, such as sword bearers Cazimir and Bucşenescu, cupbearer Stamati etc.; to name a head for the first department; to name a prosecutor and two judicial inspectors: one for civil cases and another for penal files; to reconfirm the competences of the third direction because its functions are practically performed by the second department and thus transformed by the governor in his own civil office. The irregularities of the second department were caused by the abusive interference of the governor<sup>93</sup>.

Svinin ascertained that Russian civil servants were named to perform different administrative functions and that they “did not keep the laws, and did not guide themselves according to the strict principles and moral norms”, “did not know the Moldavian language”, “made difficult their contact with the locals” and, besides, “the sub-prefect’s powers did not have any limits”<sup>94</sup>.

Concerning the Moldavian legislative system, Svinin states that both in Moldavia and in Bessarabia there was implemented not only the unwritten common law, but also the written law: Justinian’s laws, the *Basilica*, the *Exabible* of Armenopolis, Basil the Wolf’s laws and written charters of the Moldavian rulers<sup>95</sup>. Svinin’s report thwarted in governor Hartingh and his acolytes’ plans. Incontestably, the unwritten common law was dominant in Moldavia, but it was not the single source of law. The sterile statements of the Russian civil servants were contested by another Russian civil servant who tried to penetrate into the essence of the problem. With the aim of imposing the Russian administration in Bessarabia, they did many things: forgery, tendentious interpretation of the local relations, falsification of facts etc. To find out the Moldavian absence of laws, it was necessary to study as superficially as possible the documentation. One could study the documents only if one knew the local language and relations. If you do not know them and do not want to know them, the simplest way was to state that what you did not want to exist, it did not exist. Only this way, in our opinion, the irresponsible appreciations of the Russian civil servants about the Moldavian legislative system can be explained.

The deplorable state of the region was also confirmed by P. Kiselev, who wrote to tsar Alexandru I, “to persuade you that the present situation of the administration is nefarious. I’d like Your Majesty to give an order to make the calculations of how many people were when the peace was made, how many Bulgarians moved to us, how many remained and then how many left, preferring more the Turkish one than our local government”<sup>96</sup>.

Another eloquent proof referring to the first years of the Russian administration in Bessarabia was the letter of Manuc Bei Mirzoian addressed to the

<sup>92</sup> П. Свиньин, *Описание Бессарабской области*, in *Записки императорского Одесского общества истории и древностей*, t. 6, Одесса, 1867, c. 226-233.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 228-229, 231.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 234.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 223.

<sup>96</sup> *Bessarabia și basarabeni*, p. 160.

count I. Capodistrias<sup>97</sup>. The exodus of population is explained by the “administration mode”, that is “the cause that more than 5,000 families emigrated from Bessarabia to Moldavia”. Hartingh “is not able to perform this job, knowing neither the internal organisation of his government, nor the good manners to behave with people”. He insisted on keeping the local customs and traditions in the region, suggesting as heads of the two departments: Bocșănescu and Bașotă, considered competent and honest<sup>98</sup>.

He severely evaluated the activities of Hartingh and of count Capodistrias, and wrote in his letter to A. N. Bahmetiev on June 4, 1816, that everything done up to that moment in the administration of Bessarabia was imperfect and vicious. Later, he recommended revoking the civil servants who worked for Hartingh. “Instead of attracting people, concluded I. Capodistrias, the administration made the natives emigrate”. Even tsar Alexander I recognized: “To my deepest sorrow, I am informed that all my intentions are not yet realised and the irregularities have reached the climax”<sup>99</sup>.

The state of tension between the local nobility and the Russian civil servants, the abuses and the chaos that dominated within the administrative activities, the deplorable situation of the locals who no longer could support the horrors of the new domination emigrated across the Pruth, and provoked vexation to central authorities. The information received from Bessarabia and also Svinin's report confirmed the extremely complicated state of Bessarabia.

After finishing the dealings with the Vienna Congress, Alexander I came to Russia and personally got involved in solving the Bessarabian problems. An important role at that time had I. Capodistrias – promoter of liberal policy and one of the ardent supporters of a constitutional orientation. He was entrusted by the tsar to inform him about Bessarabia's problems and in January 1816 ordered to address only to I. Capodistrias all the documents concerning Bessarabia<sup>100</sup>. Until August 1822, all the problems concerning Bessarabia's administration were solved with the participation of Capodistrias, together with a special civil office. He was also the person by means of whom, later, the plenipotentiary *namesnic* of Bessarabia addressed to the tsar<sup>101</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> Manuc Bei Mirzoian, a very well-known personality of those times, that influenced the people by “his beauty, diplomatic intelligence and knowledge”, provided services for Russia during the war of 1806-1812 and as a recompense tsar Alexander I gave him Russian citizenship. He was given the rank of a state counsellor and the possibility to contact directly the tsar and the minister of Foreign Affairs, to inform them about the situation of the Romanian Principalities, Turkey and Bessarabia. In 1815, he settled down in Bessarabia. The importance of his letter consisted in the impartial and veridical presentation of the real facts from Bessarabia, three years after the annexation. See Gh. Bezveconăi, *Manuc-bei*, in “Din trecutul nostru”, no. 3-4, 1934, p. 50; I. Varta, *Manuc-Bei despre situația Basarabiei la 1815*, in “Patrimoniul”, no. 3, 1991, p. 7.

<sup>98</sup> *Manuc Bei Mirzoian. Observații asupra stării actuale a Basarabiei*, in “Patrimoniul”, no. 3, 1991, pp. 9-14.

<sup>99</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 5, inv. 2, doc. 1, f. 1-3, d. 308, f. 178; *История Молдавии. Документы и материалы*, t. II, Кишинев, 1957. с. 205.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*, с. 205.

<sup>101</sup> Б. Трубецкой, *Пушкин в Молдавии*, Кишинев, 1963, с. 35.

In February 1815, a committee was created in Count Capodistrias' subordination, to make new administrative rules for Bessarabia<sup>102</sup>. Analysing the situation created in the province, the situation could be ameliorated only by naming a civil servant of high rank, empowered with large competences and having the tsar's confidence. In his reports to the tsar, he insisted on establishing in the region the office of a plenipotentiary namesnic, as a remedy against the frequent abuses in the administration and for calming the spirits and redressing the situation.

The problems were examined by the Ministries' Council of Russia, which, at the meeting of January 15, 1816, decided: to send to Bessarabia a civil servant of a higher rank to rule the administration according to the normative acts in force and to elaborate new rules for the administration of the province; to institute a special committee for helping the civil servant of higher rank that would be sent to Bessarabia; to constitute a committee within the framework of Ministries' Council that would deal with the problems of Bessarabia.

On February 22, the Ministries' Council decided, until the tsar's approval of the decision from January 15, to send to Bessarabia a confident person to prevent new misdeeds<sup>103</sup>. The final decision was sanctioned by the tsar, Hartingh was dismissed<sup>104</sup> and in his place was appointed I. H. Calagheorghi, governor of the province of Ecaterinoslav<sup>105</sup>.

The dismissal of Hartingh did not mean an attempt to maintain the former administrative organisation and the local laws by the Russian central authorities, but it meant an insignificant modification of the tactic decree. The designation of I. H. Calagheorghi to perform that function had the purpose to rehabilitate the image of the Russian administrative authorities, badly deteriorated by Hartingh's administration, and to ameliorate the relations with the local nobility.

On May 21, 1816, plenipotentiary namesnic of Bessarabia was appointed general-lieutenant A. N. Bahmetiev, who performed the function of general governor of Podolia<sup>106</sup>. The tsar's decree of naming Bahmetiev was accompanied by instructions which specified the tasks that had to be done by the plenipotentiary namesnic of Bessarabia. The most important ones were: to restore Bessarabia's administration on the basis of the existent regulations; to elaborate a new regional administrative regulation; to regulate the ways of tax collection; to organize the borders' safety; to open the borders for cattle export; to rebuild the Danubian ports; to ensure conditions for the development of vineyards<sup>107</sup>.

The plenipotentiary namesnic had unlimited power. All authorities and administrative institutions of the region were in the subordination of the namesnic,

<sup>102</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 2, inv. 1, d. 386, f. 9-10.

<sup>103</sup> А. Накко, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>104</sup> After his designation, Hartingh settled down on his wife's property from Orhei, where he lived 15 years. During this period, he always quarrelled with his wife's relatives. See И. Халипа, *Основные исторические данные о Бессарабии*, in *Труды Бессарабской губернской архивной комиссии*, t. 2, Кишинев, 1902, с. 36.

<sup>105</sup> Л. Кассо, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>106</sup> N.A.R.M., fund 17, inv. 1, d. 15, f. 7.

<sup>107</sup> *Полное собрание законов Российской империи*, t. 33, с. 665.

including the citadels which previously were in the subordination of the military authorities. The introduction of the institution of plenipotentiary namesnic and giving him unlimited power diminished substantially the role and influence of the governor in the regional administration.

The plenipotentiary namesnic was in direct subordination to the tsar and did not depend on the central ministries. The cases of collaboration between the namesnic and the Ministry of Internal Affairs concerning the problems of colonists were solved. All correspondence concerning Bessarabia was transmitted to the plenipotentiary namesnic<sup>108</sup>.

In his letter to Bahmetiev, on June 4, 1816, I. Capodistrias wrote about the tsar's interest in setting up the order in Bessarabia and that "it is necessary to ensure prosperity to the new province, the welfare that could contribute to the consolidation of peaceful relations with Turkey. One should prove by concrete facts that by keeping the distinct national character of this province, we could make it useful to the Empire if speaking about policy, finances, population and trade". To successfully realize these tasks, it was necessary to make the civil servant disposable<sup>109</sup>.

When the institution of the plenipotentiary namesnic was introduced to Bessarabia, the period of provisional "autonomous" administration ended. On the basis of our analysis, we reached the following conclusions: until the annexation to Pruth- Dniester inter-river, later named Bessarabia, an efficient administrative system existed, constituted on the basis of the Moldavian administrative laws and customs; immediately after annexation, the Russian authorities promoted a specific administrative policy in Bessarabia. The administrative structure of the local level was maintained provisionally, but for the constitution of regional administrative institutions, the structure, the competences and the composition of the Moldavian Divan was considered.

The provisional character of administrative organisation implemented in Moldavia was imposed by Russia's situation of that time. Undeniably, the abusive implementation of the Russian administrative system on a territory where the majority of the population was Romanian, with judicial secular and administrative traditions and a noble class eager to maintain the individuality of its nation, was a very complicated task. It is evident that under such conditions it was considered the anti-Russian spirit of the population, especially of the nobility that was very affected by Moldavia's dismemberment. The Russian tsar, constrained by these realities, had to modify the traditional administrative policy and to tolerate on a territory under occupation a similar administration.

Initially, the administrative organisation of Bessarabia was determined by the fact that Russia was not sure of the possibility of maintaining the annexed territory, in difficult circumstances, after signing the peace treaty at Bucharest. Later, the war with Napoleon I and the European military campaigns made Russia draw away its attention from the annexed territory. Russia started to deal again with Bessarabia's problems in the second half of 1815.

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 867.

<sup>109</sup> *История Молдавии. Документы и материалы*, т. II, Кишинев, 1957, с. 205.

The maintenance of similarities with the Moldavian administrative system was dictated by another desideratum of Russia's expansionist policy. With the immediate aim of dominating the Balkans, Russia planned to demonstrate the advantages of its domination and to win the sympathy of the neighbouring nations.

The provisional nature of the administrative system implemented in Bessarabia substantially influenced its functionality. This temporary system was far from perfection and the implementation of this administrative system brought forward very many deficiencies and imperfections. The provisional state of the administration provoked many animosities between the local nobility and the Russian aristocracy concerning the administrative matters of Bessarabia.

In the first years of the Russian occupation, the Bessarabian nobility constituted a force more or less defined by unity, capable of fighting for national values. Because in the 19<sup>th</sup> century only the noble representatives had the privilege to work in the administrative institutions, this fact was significant to maintain the Moldavian administrative traditions in the region.

The Russian officials, for whom Bessarabia was not an aim, but a way to realise their expansionist plans in the Balkans, took into consideration the existent situation and the nobles' requests for maintaining the national administrative structures. Bessarabia, according to Russia's plans, was supposed to attract the neighbouring peoples. But in the first years of the Russian domination it was transformed into an area full of abuses and misdeeds. The situation created did not contribute to creating a good image for Russia concerning the maintenance of Christianity. That's why, willy-nilly, there had to be done many changes to redress the situation.

By designating in Bessarabia a plenipotentiary namesnic by the Russian authorities, it meant to control the administrative institutions at all levels.

As a result of the reorganisation of the temporary administrative system, a larger centralization of the power in the region was realised. It also opened the access to the Russian administrative activities, institutions and legislation in Bessarabia.

Under the pretext of fighting against irregularities and corruption, a massive process of denationalising the Bessarabian administration began. Several local noblemen were dismissed and replaced by Russian civil servants.

**Cahul**